

C.I.A. Data Indicate Foreign Agents Helped Spy on U.S. Citizens Abroad

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 21—The Central Intelligence Agency apparently made use of friendly foreign intelligence services to help it obtain information about United States citizens traveling abroad, according to documents that the agency has declassified but not made public.

The documents concern Operation Chaos, the Government's counterintelligence program against antiwar activists and others it considered "radicals" in the late 1960's and early '70's, which a commission headed by then Vice President Rockefeller concluded was "beyond the proper scope of C.I.A. activity."

The number of United States citizens checked by the foreign agencies could not be determined from the C.I.A. documents.

The documents were provided on Dec. 30, 1976, to attorneys representing plaintiffs in a civil suit against present and former Government officials believed to have been involved in Operation Chaos, but their release to the public has been barred temporarily by a local District Court judge. The New York Times did not receive its information from any person covered by the court's "gag order."

The names of the foreign agencies that apparently assisted the C.I.A. have been censored from the documents, and replaced only with the designation "(B)."

In a statement that accompanied the documents, attorneys for the C.I.A. said that the "(B)," when used in this context, represented "an intelligence or security service of a foreign government in liaison with the C.I.A., or information obtained from such liaison."

Although many details of the counterintelligence program were made public through investigations by the Rockefeller commission and House and Senate committees, it was not previously known that the C.I.A. had used foreign agencies to help it collect this information.

Details Closely Guarded

In the past, the C.I.A. has been particularly sensitive about revealing details of its relationships with other intelligence agencies. A chief reason, C.I.A. officials have said privately, is that it fears the foreign agencies will be reluctant to share information, out of concern that the C.I.A. will not be able to keep it secret.

The documents released by the C.I.A. make several references to assistance by foreign intelligence agencies in connection with Operation Chaos, but do not disclose the names of the agencies or the extent of their help.

A June 30, 1969, memorandum from the C.I.A. to Tom Charles Huston, then a special assistant to President Nixon, says that "existing agency collective resources are being employed wherever feasible and new sources are being sought through independent means as well as with the assistance of foreign intelligence services and the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Although it could not be learned what resulted, if anything, one C.I.A. document dated June 11, 1968, suggests that the agency hoped to have a foreign service

undertake a range of covert activities to further Operation Chaos.

"Operation attack on this target would seem to fall in categories (B) more than usually well-qualified to undertake: intensive surveillance, technical coverage, surreptitious entry of premises and purloining of documents, and, most important, development of informants, or agent penetrations within suspect groups," the document says in part.

Another document, dated Oct. 29, 1959, suggests that either the C.I.A. or some other Federal agency was giving thought to attempting to have a foreign agent penetrate dissident groups here in the United States to provide information for the project.

"In addition to arranging for systematic coverage of the [blank] Chaos target in your area, we are particularly interested in exploring the possibility of [blank] providing one of more qualified penetration agents of (B) new left for activities abroad. Particularly interest in use [sic] such agent in United States. Agent candidate with solid doctrinaire background would probably be able insinuate self into domestic or foreign organizations of priority interest, especially if he able to attend some university classes," the document says.

No Comment by Agency

Andrew Falkiewicz, a C.I.A. spokesman, said today that he had not yet seen the documents and thus could not comment on them. But he added that he had never heard of any case in which an agent of a foreign intelligence agency was used in this country as part of "Operation Chaos."

Richard Ober, the former C.I.A. official who signed the document, said that, as in the past, he would not comment on any matters involving the agency, and that any comment would have to come from the C.I.A. itself. Two of his former superiors, William E. Colby, the former Director of Central Intelligence, and James Angleton, the former head of the agency's counterintelligence operations, said, however, that they had never heard of such a document, and never heard of any such use of a foreign agent.

One of the last documents in the series, dated March 15, 1974, alerts C.I.A. stations to the termination of the project. It says that in the future the agency could respond to "written requests from the F.B.I. for collection abroad of 'information of foreign terrorists or counterintelligence matters involving private American citizens.'" In any such dealings with foreign liaison services, the document advised, it should be made clear that the C.I.A. was acting only as a "channel of communication" for the F.B.I.

According to the Rockefeller commission report, Operation Chaos, which was intended to develop information about possible Communist ties to the antiwar movement, resulted in the opening of 13,000 files on 7,200 American citizens.